

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS: FERVENT IN SPIRIT."

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Poetry.

My Mother's Song.

W. W. CALDWELL.

I pray thee sing it o'er again,
And sing it soft and low;
It is the same sweet, holy strain
I loved so long ago,
When in my mother's arms I lay,
A little child at close of day.

It brings once more, the dear home place
Before my longing eye,
The elms that o'er it interlace
Their shady branchery,
And the slim poplar, grown so high,
I deemed it touched the very sky.

The currants, too, beside the fence,
The giant gooseberries rare,
And the great lilac-bush, from whence
Such fragrances filled the air;
The gravel walks, so trim and neat,
The grape, that bowered the garden seat,

The apple-tree, whose blossoms swung
My casement far above,
The birds that built therein, and sung
Their matinal notes of love;
These, and a thousand memories more,
Those half-forgotten tones restore.

But most, what tender thoughts they bring,
Of her, so angel-mild,
Who thus, at twilight hour would sing
To rest, her weary child,
And pray the father kind to keep
Unceasing watch around his sleep!

My mother! many years have past,
Mid other scenes I rove,
But long as life and memory last
I'll think of all thy love—
Thy patient love, thy tender cares,
Thy gentle smile, thy earnest prayers.

And oft, amid life's busy throng,
Its endless whirl and roar,
My wearied, care-worn heart will long
For childhood's rest once more—
The calm, sweet rest, beside thy knee,
Listening to the songs of infancy.

Religious Miscellany.

Happiness found in Christ.

Christians often distrust the power of religion to make them perfectly happy, and turn to the wealth and pleasures of the world, as if without these complete contentment was impossible. But God often teaches them that when the world is furthest from them, their peace and satisfaction are most entire. So Payson found it in his dying hours, and said that when suffering extreme torture by bodily pain, and stretched helpless on his bed, he had never been so happy in all his life. So Henry Lyman, the martyred missionary of Sumatra, found it, as may be inferred from the following extract from one of his letters:

"A New England home, with all its endearments, is not a *sine qua non* for happiness in this world. Many in America thought I was making myself perfectly miserable in engaging in the missionary labor. I could not convince them that God can make thorny beds 'soft as downy pillows are.' Now I can speak from experience. While the blessings of New England are rich, and calculated to make one happy in this life, yet happiness does not consist in them, but rather in the mind, in the man himself. One may be perfectly wretched in America, while in the midst of savages another may be perfectly happy. And why can a missionary be happy; because God fulfills His promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;' and also according 'as thy day is, so shall thy strength be.' In our little boat of eight tons, managed by Malays, who are rather indifferent navigators, in our little cabin, partitioned off by mats in the back part of the hold, with not room sufficient to stand upright—amidst all the smells of bilge-water and ship-stores—with our chests on each side for sleeping and writing, and a clean mat spread on the floor, on which to eat our rice and chicken broth, for want of room to place a table, I was never more happy, if I except the few

first hours after I opened my eyes in the kingdom of Christ. Why is it that so many will cling to the good things of this world? as if in them were centered all happiness; as if God had no power to make those very blessings the bane of their existence; as if He were unable to give them grace sufficient when they follow His commands, and make what appears to be a sacrifice, a blessing. The truth is, no Christian makes a sacrifice when he follows Christ, any more than the impenitent sinner does when he gives up the world, and yields his heart to his Saviour. He receives a hundredfold more; if not in this world, yet he lays it up in a sure banking-house for the next. O, had I a voice that could be made to ring in every Christian's ear I would send peal upon peal the cry—*Live for Christ—devote all to Him*, until it should make an abiding impression upon his heart, and lead him to throw away his unsatisfying reliance upon worldly gratifications, and seek all good in endeavoring to build up the kingdom of Christ. Not that he must necessarily leave his home and country, but that he must daily ask the Lord with an earnest anxiety to know the truth, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do this day?' So guide and direct me that my influence may be felt in eternity, and so direct my affairs in all future life as that the greatest glory may redound to thy name."

Selected for the Christian Messenger.

Rev. Enoch Towner's Letter.

Extract of a letter from the Rev. Enoch Towner, to the Editor of Mass. Baptist Missionary Magazine, dated Argyle, April 13th, 1807.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

Though unacquainted with you after the flesh, yet I trust I am a partaker with you in the blessed spirit of the gospel, and engaged in the same glorious cause of the Redeemer. The great Head of the church is pleased to indulge me the pleasure of inviting lost sinners to the fountain of the blood of the slaughtered Lamb of God for the salvation of their souls. We have heard of the progress of the Redeemer's kingdom in many parts of the world by means of your magazine. Perusing these accounts, has awakened in my soul sensations which I cannot express, which induces me to address you with this freedom, and which I trust you will pardon, when you shall hear of the work of God in these parts. I was formerly settled over a Baptist church in the township of Digby, in the County of Annapolis, where God was pleased to bless my poor labors to that people. Here I lived some years, and improved my gifts, travelling abroad but seldom, as my circumstances in life would not permit. And having my heart much knit to that people, in the bonds of the gospel, I have found severe trials at the thought of leaving them, to preach to those who were destitute in other places.

On the 16th of July last, I sat out on a journey to Argyle, where I arrived on Saturday the 8th, late in the evening. The people not having notice of my coming, and the next morning being very rainy, but few attended meeting. I was requested to stay another Sabbath, which I did; and also preached several times in the course of the week. Religion was at a very low ebb among the few professors, who belonged to a church formerly established by a Mr. Frost of the *New-light* persuasion. After his death, the church was re-established, and increased under the ministration of other preachers, whose labors had been blessed to the salvation of many souls; they still holding the baptism of believers, non-essential to fellowship in the church of Christ. Oh that all Christ's Ministers would endeavour to impress on the minds of his people, the necessity of obedience to his high commands. The broken and scattered state of the church was great; all discipline was done away. Nevertheless there were a few mourning souls, that would not be comforted, because God's heritage lay waste.

Here I tarried the next Lord's-day, and preached from Solomon's Song v. 16, and

in the afternoon from chap. i. 8, and the Lord was pleased to bless the opportunity. The set time was now come to raise his people from the dust. The work begun in the following manner:—A young woman who had been awakened by hearing some young people sing, and discourse upon the happiness of religion, some time previous in the county of Digby, the impression of which never left her, till this Sabbath evening, when she found peace in believing. Her feelings led her to exhort her companions to turn to the Lord. Here I saw the Lord had begun his work, and hence could not find it my duty to leave the place.

The young professors manifested a desire to follow their Lord's commands, and be buried with him by baptism. It was my sincere desire they should, but there being no church for them to covenant with, as most of the old professors, (as I observed before) could not see the expediency of baptism, I was at a loss how to proceed; but resolved to follow the Lord's command to teach and to baptize. Accordingly a conference meeting was appointed to hear their experience, when nine came forward, two old professors and seven young converts, and were baptized the first Lord's day after my first arrival at this place. The Lord owned his blessed ordinance to the conviction of a number; and it was made a precious season. After this the work spread with great power, and people assembled from all parts of the town, and some from the adjoining towns. I thought it proper to send for Brother Harris Harding, as he was much more acquainted with the old professors than I was. Particularly as he had formerly laboured among them, and as many had professed under his ministry. Our meeting was in order to see if we could not settle a church; but it proved to no purpose at this time. However, ten came forward and were baptized. We both went into the water together to shew that we agreed in heart and practice. The glory of the Lord seemed to overshadow the place, and move upon the baptismal waters. But it looked dark as to settling a church; for the most of the old professors stood as before. I now thought it proper to form those that had been baptized into some order; and for that purpose offered them a covenant, which they cheerfully signed. But God was working out of our sight, in the minds of those old professors. For in a few days from this time, there were twenty-two came forward to baptism. And O, this was a wonderful day indeed! Here was seen a mother, son, and wife, and granddaughter, all following their Lord. Here was one man seventy years of age, and a little boy of only ten! Now was the desire of my soul accomplished in this thing, in that the Lord had united the young and old professors in one body. They requested that they might commemorate the death of their Redeemer; I accordingly administered the Lord's Supper to them, and it was indeed a blessed feast to many. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? Now they came flying like clouds, of as doves to a window before a storm. Baptism was administered five Lord's days successively; until seventy-eight joined the church. After staying here thirteen Sabbaths, I was under the necessity of returning to my people. I tarried there four weeks and then returned to this place again. This was the last of November. I found the Lord was still at work, though not so powerfully as when I left them. Several acknowledged a work of grace to have been wrought in their hearts during my absence. But the cloud seemed to return again; for there being a number of men who follow the seas, on returning home to winter, seeing such an alteration in the place, they were struck with deep solemnity. Many were wounded to their hearts, and made to groan under the weight of their sins. There were not many of them who came out openly to profess religion, until the past month, when a young man, who had been under great distress all winter, found comfort; and after preaching, could not refrain from giving glory to God, for his unexpected deliverance. The divine presence very sensibly filled the place.

Many giving glory to their Redeemer, and many deeply wounded with a sense of their sins.

The last Sabbath in March, twenty came forward, and were baptized. My letter has swelled under my pen, but I must conclude with adding, that one hundred and twenty have been baptized. There were five baptisms in the winter season. Twenty-four have told their experience, who are not yet baptized, and a number of others are under hopeful impressions. The work is still going on in this place, and spreading rapidly in different parts of this province.

I am, Sir, your unworthy
Brother in Christ,
ENOCH TOWNER.

For the Christian Messenger.

Countenancing Dancing Parties.

Messrs. Editors,

An "Inquirer" has requested my "opinion and advice, through the columns of the *Christian Messenger*," with reference to members of Baptist Churches allowing their children, while under their control, to "attend balls and dancing parties."

The bringing up of a family is a difficult task. It requires much prudence and discretion. Excessive indulgence is usually attended with ruinous consequences. Undue restraint is liable to be equally pernicious. Children that are incessantly thwarted and irritated, sometimes become reckless, and plunge headlong into ruin. (Rev. xxix. 15: Eph. vi. 4: Col. iii. 21.) It does not, therefore, appear advisable to attempt to restrain young persons from all social intercourse with youthful associates of good moral character; nor yet to scrutinize rigidly all their recreations. But there obviously must be limits to the indulgence of children.

There are, indeed, some who regard themselves as Christians, and yet deem it consistent for them to practise *dancing*: but I believe that the professors of vital and experimental religion generally view the subject in a different light. It may be naturally expected that the former class will countenance their children in this diversion; but the latter cannot consistently do so. They may themselves, on a week day, enjoy a pleasant walk, ride, social visit, or the reading of history and general news. But, as they would consider it wrong in them to do any of these things on the Lord's-day, they must not tolerate it in their children. If, then, those who profess to disapprove of balls or dancing parties, and refuse to be present at them, encourage the attendance of those under their control, they subject themselves to the charge of inconsistency and hypocrisy, and cast a stumbling-block before the world.

Against the practice of dancing, as conducted in our day, there are many strong objections. It is undeniably a waste of precious time. In many cases great expense is incurred. By diverting attention from reading and useful studies, it prevents mental improvement. As it is exceedingly infatuating, even its abettors are constrained to acknowledge, that it is often carried to what they deem excess. Parties become very numerous, and whole nights are frequently spent in them. While some pretend that dancing is a healthful exercise, the fact is notorious, that, through change of dress, excessive exercise in warm rooms, and subsequent exposure to the cold, it often destroys the constitution, and brings its victim to an early grave. By attendance at balls, associations are not unfrequently formed which engulf the unwary in vice and misery. The practice evidently tends to obliterate every serious impression, to attach the mind increasingly to worldly pleasures, and to present an additional obstacle in the way of conversion to God and godliness.

Had I encouraged or indulged my children in this course—happily I did not—and should any of them leave the world without giving evidence of piety, I see not how I could avoid bitter and painful reflections on myself, as having been accessory to their eternal ruin.

It may be alleged that pious parents can